

Sherlockian Theatrical Society



A non-Judgmental Play Appreciation Society

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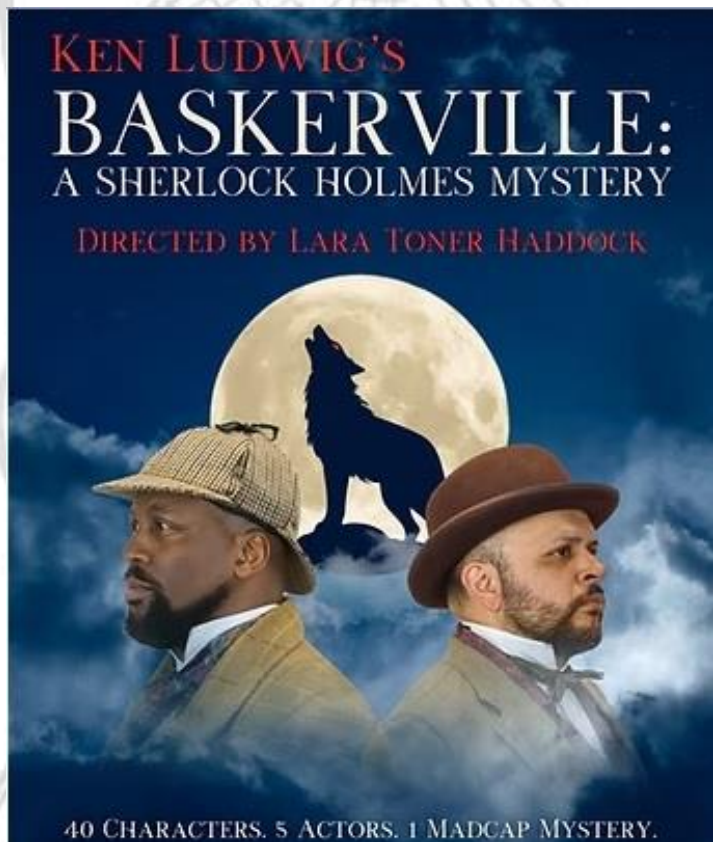
"Baskervilles: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery"

By Ken Ludwig

Austin, Texas

For anyone who might be keeping tabs on these sort of things, this is the 12th time "Baskervilles: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery" has been reviewed by the Sherlockian Theatrical Society in a dozen different theatres. We are not a broken record, just someone who really enjoys this play. On Sunday, I was at the Austin Playhouse just across the street from mourning University of Texas, who lost the SEC Championship game less than a day before. I did not see any black arm bands just a bunch of sad faces. However, there were no sad faces inside the theatre where more than 100 patrons were treated to Ken Ludwig's brilliant play.

The opening, as in the 11 other times I have seen this play, is inside the sitting rooms at 221b Baker Street where Sherlock Holmes (Aaron D. Alexander) and Doctor Watson (Ben Wolfe) are examining a walking stick left behind by an unnamed person. Actor 1 (Stephen Mercantel), Actor 2 (Baily Ellis) and Actress 1 (Sarah Zeringue) portray the 40+ other characters through the play. By now, we all know the story by heart. Dr. Mortimer arrives to claim his stick and reads the legend of the Hound of the Baskervilles



to Holmes and Watson and Martha Hudson. When Sir Henry Baskerville arrives, once again he is from Texas with the perfect West Texas drawl, he is more interested in shooting something than hearing about a 'big dog'. The same actor plays Inspector Lestrade. He had the audience roaring with laughter when the two characters are in the same scene, switching accents and switching hats for each alternating line.

Mrs. Barrymore (Ms. Zeringue) is always one of my favorite characters. With her over-the-top Germanic accent, over stressing her 'V's" with "W's" like saying 'witals' for 'vitals' always gets huge laughs as she stands next to her husband, whose hunchback seems to change sides ala Marty Feldman in Young Frankenstein. The interaction on stage is great folly as well. The built-in wardrobe malfunctions and the intentional prompting for an actor to change characters is just part of the fun of knowing what is coming next. Eventually I can see myself quoting all the line like a Sherlockian version of A Rocky Horror Picture Show.

It is really a joy having seen this play so many different times and seeing the way each different director approaches different parts of the play. Director Lara Toner Haddock has done a marvelous job. The scene in the play where Dr. Watson and Sir Henry Baskerville are at the train station heading to see Dr. Mortimer is always interpreted uniquely. Outside there is a fierce wind storm blowing was choreographed to achieve the maximum effect of gale-force winds. Lowell Bartholomee, listed as the Video Designer, has put together a screen behind the stage that changes continually throughout the play. There are frightening flashes of a red-eyed hound with fangs displayed when the hell-hound first attacked Sir Charles in the Yew Alley. It is just a flash but the effect is perfect. Using this technology, more theatres are going to the video board as a cost-effective way to allow multiple changes at minimal cost to the production.

As a reminder, The Sherlockian Theatrical Society is a non-judgmental society. It is our belief that any play about Sherlock Holmes is worth attending. We love Sherlock Holmes and we love live theater, so nothing will deter us off of our chosen path.

Break a leg!!!

Flower Mound, TX
Dec.8, 2024